

avoid one. Now, again, I hope cooler heads will prevail on the other side so we can keep the government funded before tomorrow's deadline.

H.R. 4350

Now, Madam President, on the NDAA, once again, Republican dysfunction—that seems to be what is going on in the other Chamber, not by all Republican Members but by some who seem to run the show—the Republican show, that is. Republican dysfunction has, sadly, caused immense damage on another routine, important, and largely bipartisan priority, the NDAA.

Democrats have been working in good faith with the other side for weeks—since before the Thanksgiving holiday—to secure an agreement to approve our annual Defense bill. Last night, because of the objections of one Republican, the NDAA has, once again, been prevented from moving forward.

As I said last night, the amendment pushed by my colleague would certainly raise a blue slip objection in the House and, thus, kill the entire NDAA. Now, the Senator from Florida says there are no blue slip issues, but this isn't a matter of opinion. The authority here rests with the Ways and Means Committee in the House, and they have stated, unequivocally, that his proposal would raise blue slip issues. There is no objection to the substance of the amendment presented by the senior Senator from Florida, but it simply would violate the provision in our Constitution that requires revenue measures to originate in the House. Other Members had amendments with similar issues, but they worked with the Ways and Means Committee in the House to resolve them because they are the arbiter. Senator RUBIO has not done the same.

It is unfortunate that this misguided demand of a single Republican Senator is preventing this important legislation to support our national security from moving in the Senate, particularly in light of the fact that so many amendments were allowed to be offered by Senator REED and Senator INHOFE. The number of amendments that would be voted on—let me repeat—would exceed the total number of amendments—the total number of amendments—that were allowed on the NDAA under the 4 years of Republican leadership during Donald Trump's Presidency.

So to say that we are in a process that is unbalanced or unfair is totally false. It is just, simply, one person holding it up. For the sake of our troops and our families, I hope this Republican dysfunction can be addressed.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3299

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3299) to prohibit the Department of Defense from discharging or withholding pay or benefits from members of the National Guard based on COVID-19 vaccination status.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022—Continued

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, two-thirds of Americans are worried about inflation. About half of the middle class and 70 percent of low-income families just told Gallup that rising prices have been a personal hardship for their households. That is why 67 percent of the American people say that Washington needs to “cut back on spending and printing money,” but here in Washington, Democrats are bound and determined to do just the opposite. They want to try the crazy strategy of inflating their way out of inflation—another massive, reckless taxing-and-spending spree.

Even the most generous estimates, when the CBO has to swallow all—all—of the Democrats' accounting gimmicks at face value, still say their proposal would entail \$800 billion in new deficit spending over the next 5 years alone—over just 5 years. Outside experts who are allowed to reject the Democrats' obvious budget gimmicks find the real cost—the real cost—of their bill would actually be close to \$5 trillion. That is with a “t”—trillion dollars. After a decade, it would increase deficits by \$2.8 trillion, but the reckless pricetag, actually, isn't the only problem.

What is remarkable is that the Democrats want to spend all these trillions but not leave citizens with any impressive, enduring national project in return. There is no Hoover Dam, Interstate Highway System, or Moon landing on the other side of their mountains of borrowed money—nothing like that. It is just a giant catalog of socialist mediocrity: new entitlements here, new transfer programs there, new ways to let bureaucrats run

families' lives, and shameless—shameless—goodies for specific interest groups that support the political left—a giant, muddled mess that would leave families with fewer childcare choices and higher costs, with fewer new prescription drugs and cures, with higher prices for less reliable energy. It is, literally, a reckless taxing-and-spending spree that hurts American families and actually—believe it or not—helps China.

There are a lot of big, sweeping, radical changes in their proposal that would change families' lives dramatically and entirely for the worse. But in between the sweeping wish-fulfillment for people who call themselves “democratic socialists,” there is also a remarkable amount of just pure waste, absurd—literally absurd—little giveaways, and interest group goodies. A billion here, a billion there, and hope the American people won't notice if it is buried in enough bureaucratic gibberish.

Here are just a few examples.

This bill would supply billions of dollars to help colleges and universities indoctrinate college students with even more leftwing propaganda and billions more to give them made-up Potemkin jobs in a make-work program they are calling a Civilian Climate Corps—this at a time when industries already cannot find workers.

Their bill would set aside multiple billions of dollars to put Federal Government employees, like IRS agents and postal carriers, into brandnew electric vehicles.

Earlier this year, the Biden administration made sure that luxury Teslas, with a sticker price up to \$97,000, were on the list for government procurement—\$97,000 per vehicle.

So working families might be having to choose between heating costs and new shoes for the kids. Oh, but don't worry, Democrats will make sure IRS auditors can cruise around in Silicon Valley's finest.

Their proposal would create a huge \$29 billion slush fund that activists are applauding as the foundation for something called—now, listen to this—a national green bank. Can you say Solyndra on steroids? An entire bank to finance pipe dreams that can't earn support out in the real economy.

Separately, they are planning to spend multiple billions of taxpayer dollars for something the liberals are calling—listen to this one now—tree equity. I will let that one speak for itself.

Of course, the Green New Deal folks aren't the only constituency Democrats want to pay off. This reckless taxing-and-spending spree is also designed to knock out all their Christmas shopping for trial lawyers, Big Labor bosses, Ivy League administrators, and blue-State millionaires, all in one fell swoop.

There is the State and local tax carve-out, the SALT gimmick, that would give an extra tax cut to two-thirds of the households making a million dollars or more a year. Perhaps to

make sure these reckless policies get good press, Democrats have included a \$1.6 billion bailout for the news media. I am not making this up. We are essentially talking about government welfare for newsrooms—for newsrooms. All this, and it goes on and on and on.

There is a new special tax break for rich universities' massive endowments—hundreds of millions of dollars to overhaul kids' school lunch menus, including making sure they are "culturally appropriate." I guess they want to make sure that children's cafeteria trays are sufficiently woke.

And goodness knows they couldn't skip over Big Labor. So the Democrats' plan would let working Americans' above-the-line tax deduction for charitable contributions expire—that goes away—but they would replace it with a brandnew deduction that only applies to union dues.

And then there is pure pork of the old-school kind. The Speaker of the House tried to sneak in hundreds of millions of dollars for a special park in San Francisco. And the Senate Democratic leader has spent much trying to double the bill's funding for public housing so the chronically mismanaged authority in his hometown could get \$40 billion to clean up its messes.

There is even what appears to be a \$33 million kickback that is largely for one Democratic Congressman whose vote Speaker PELOSI literally had to lock down. Out of nowhere, one mostly dormant government Commission that is important to this particular Democrat's district gets a funding increase of 13,000 percent—13,000 percent. You heard that right, a funding increase of 13,000 percent. What a terrific coincidence for this particular Democratic House Member.

So take a step back. Our colleagues' proposal isn't some big national leap into the 21st century; it is an endless—endless—hodgepodge of this nonsense: partisan back-scratching, interest group giveaways, and shameless—shameless—waste. And through tax hikes and inflation, working American families will foot the bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUREAU OF PRISONS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it has been a great source of debate over the past couple of years over a very basic question: How was Jeffrey Epstein able to take his own life in Federal prison on August 10, 2019?

Last week, we found some answers in the New York Times. It pointed out a series of stunning failures within the Bureau of Prisons.

According to the Times: "The newly obtained records offer no support to

the explosion of conspiracy theories that Mr. Epstein's death was not a suicide. . . . But they do paint a picture of incompetence and sloppiness by some within the Bureau of Prisons."

That incompetence and sloppiness was evident from the moment Jeffrey Epstein entered the Metropolitan Correctional Center. On his intake screening form, Mr. Epstein was described as "a Black male," with no prior record of sex offense convictions. A 5-second Google search would tell you that not only was Jeffrey Epstein White, he was one of the most notorious sex traffickers in recent history.

And what about the night he died? He had already attempted suicide in the weeks leading up to his death, so you would think that the officials in the Bureau of Prisons would keep close watch over this potentially suicidal inmate.

In fact, the opposite happened. Jeffrey Epstein was left alone, unmonitored, in his cell. The two officers on duty were allegedly dozing off and scrolling on their phones. And the next morning, Epstein was found dead with a bed sheet tied around his neck. Because of these failures, the survivors of Epstein's despicable crimes will never get to see him brought to justice.

Six months after Epstein died, former Attorney General Bill Barr handpicked Michael Carvajal to lead the Bureau of Prisons. It could have been a new beginning for the Bureau, a chance to get to the bottom of widely publicized neglect and mismanagement—and to hold the appropriate parties accountable. But that fresh start never came because, since day one, Director Carvajal of the Bureau of Prisons has shown no intention of reforming that institution.

Consider the case of the warden who ran the Metropolitan Correctional Center the night Jeffrey Epstein died. How did Director Carvajal respond to that warden's failure of leadership? Well, if you can imagine it, he actually rewarded him. Director Carvajal appointed the same warden to lead a different facility, the largest Federal prison in the United States: FCI Fort Dix in New Jersey.

And it seems that warden hasn't learned any lessons in leadership since Mr. Epstein's death. Last month, an inmate in FCI Fort Dix was attacked from behind and stabbed in the eye.

These are not isolated incidents. For years, the Bureau of Prisons has been plagued by corruption, chronic understaffing, and misconduct by high-ranking officials. And in the nearly 2 years since Director Carvajal took control of the Bureau, he has failed to address the mounting crises in our Nation's Federal prison system.

It is far past time for new, reform-minded leadership in the Bureau of Prisons.

A few weeks ago, the Associated Press published a breathtaking investigation into the Bureau. They concluded that it is a "hotbed of abuse,

graft and corruption, and has turned a blind eye to employees accused of misconduct."

Since 2019, more than 100 Federal prison workers have been arrested for, charged with, or convicted of crimes, including sexual abuse, murder, and introducing contraband into the prison. Altogether, these crimes account for two-thirds of the criminal cases against all Department of Justice personnel, even though BOP employees comprise less than a third of the workforce.

I want to share a few of the stories from the Associated Press report. At one Federal prison in Mississippi, an official responsible for investigating the misconduct of other staff members was arrested for his own misconduct. He was not only accused of stalking and harassing his fellow employees, but he was allowed to remain in his position. He was even authorized to continue investigating one of his accusers.

In California, a warden of a Federal women's prison was arrested and indicted earlier this year for molesting an inmate. He even kept lewd photos of the victim on his government-issued cell phone. He allegedly told the woman that she shouldn't even try to report the assault because he was "close friends" with the official who would investigate it.

The list goes on. It is a recurring pattern of misconduct by officials within the Bureau of Prisons who believe they can abuse inmates and break the law with impunity. In some cases, that is exactly what they have done.

The details in the AP investigation are shocking. And for those of us who have been following Director Carvajal's tenure, they are the latest disturbing examples of failed leadership.

Time and again, he has categorically failed to uphold his chief responsibility as Director. And what is that responsibility? Protecting the health and safety of inmates and correctional officers.

Today, the Bureau suffers from chronic and significant understaffing. Director Carvajal has failed to contain outbreaks of COVID-19, which has led to tens of thousands of inmates and staff contracting the virus. And when it comes to reforming our Federal prison system, he has failed.

In 2018, congressional Democrats and Republicans came together on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to enact the FIRST STEP Act. It was a historic piece of reform legislation to create new pathways for prison inmates to better themselves while they serve their time, so they can return to society once released.

Nearly 3 years later, the Bureau of Prisons still hasn't implemented most of these reforms.

One example, under the FIRST STEP Act, low-risk inmates are eligible to earn time credits, reducing their sentences. They do this by completing programs designed to prevent them from committing another crime.

Last month, the inspector general at the Department of Justice found that

the Bureau of Prisons has not applied these earned time credits to any of the approximately 60,000 eligible inmates.

Now the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, is charged with overseeing the Bureau of Prisons. We have tried to get answers from Director Carvajal and his team. We have repeatedly requested information.

We have asked for details about the inmate banking system. Now, there is a heck of a story. It purportedly has little oversight by the Bureau of Prisons, has allowed inmates to avoid paying child support and restitution to crime victims and other obligations.

The Bureau reportedly allowed Larry Nassar, the so-called doctor who abused hundreds of young gymnasts before he was sentenced to life in prison, to spend thousands of dollars from his Bureau of Prisons account on himself but pay only \$300 toward the debt he owes his victims.

The Bureau has delayed responding to our questions—or just flatout ignored them.

It is past time to replace Director Carvajal. This can't wait any longer. The Associated Press's investigation shows us that lives are literally at stake.

I know Attorney General Garland understands the urgency. I am calling on him today to move immediately to dismiss Director Carvajal and to bring real reform to the Bureau of Prisons.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Texas.

CHINA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in my lifetime, the People's Republic of China has gone from a poor and isolated country to one that now accounts for 20 percent of global domestic product. There is no question that the driving force behind this dramatic shift is the ruthlessness of the Chinese Communist Party led by President Xi. The CCP's ruling strategy can best be described as win at all costs, which means that China never thinks twice about disregarding basic values and international norms. But there is no question that the most immediate and grave threats are against countries close to China's borders.

Last month, I led a congressional delegation to visit the Indo-Pacific to learn more from the people on the ground doing the hard work about the challenges they face and that we face in the Indo-Pacific. In my conversations with leaders in the Philippines, Taiwan, and India, I noticed they used a different vocabulary to describe China's behavior than what we hear in Washington, DC. They didn't just talk about China's ambitions; they warned of its threats of aggression. They didn't just share concerns about China's unification with Taiwan; they spoke of the potential for an invasion. They didn't just bring up human rights abuses; they condemned the blatant genocide committed against the Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in China.

Words matter, of course, and the soft lexicon that is often used to describe the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China here in the United States and particularly inside the beltway has the potential to create a false impression about China's objectives, and it plays right into their hands.

I think we should not continue to downplay the risks to the global world order and to peace itself by what China is doing. This isn't just a government interested in competing with the United States and other countries by playing by the rules of the international order; the Chinese Communist Party is an aggressive, even belligerent and hostile power that has made economic gains through stealing intellectual property and other activities that belie its stated ambitions to become part of the liberal world order.

For example, it squashes opposition by committing genocide against its own people and muzzling—even murdering—dissidents. China has literally become a police state, where the volumes of data that they have vacuumed up in that country and the ubiquitous technical surveillance that is mainly cameras that chronicle every aspect of the lives of their citizens and the use of things like artificial intelligence have allowed them to essentially control everything that does go on in China. And these are the same tools that they intend to use on other parts of the world.

We know China has spent a lot of money developing its military resources. It has come a long way, while the United States and other countries were focused post-9/11 on the Global War on Terror. While we were focused on the Middle East, the PRC and the CCP wasted no time in rebuilding their capabilities from a military standpoint.

And they are now aggressively claiming other parts of the region, not just Taiwan, but contested islands in the South China Sea that are claimed by Japan, by the Philippines, and other countries as well.

Well, as I mentioned, one of the greatest looming threats in the region is a potential invasion of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China.

Of course, as you can see, Taiwan is just a small island of about 24 million people, just off the coast of mainland China. It is not much larger than the State of Maryland.

In every possible way you can imagine, Taiwan is a stark contrast with China. For one, it is a true democracy. Voters go to the polls with the confidence that the election results are not predetermined. Successful businesses—and there are many of them—are built on good old-fashioned hard work, not government favoritism. And the people in Taiwan—the Republic of China—enjoy the same freedoms that we do here in the United States: freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly.

Taiwan has been a self-governing entity for more than 70 years, but the Chinese Communist Party falsely asserts that the island republic is part of its territory. Indeed, Taiwan faces China as the last outpost of democracy, standing watch against authoritarianism.

Our congressional delegation met with the commander of the Indo-Pacific Command who described the current power dynamic rather succinctly. He said it is not a question of if China moves on Taiwan, but a question of when.

Indeed, the language we heard from our military leadership and others in the region was far more urgent in terms of the threat of the People's Republic of China against Taiwan than anything I have heard here in Washington, DC.

According to our top military leaders, we have an idea how long Xi might wait. He himself has said that he wants to be ready by 2027. But there is absolutely no guarantee that President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party of the People's Republic of China—there is no guarantee they won't move at another time of their choosing.

As I said, Taiwan is not the only nation on the CCP's list. China has territorial claims against a number of its neighbors. If you closed your eyes and just threw a dart at this region, you would likely hit one or more of those contested areas. Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Bhutan, India—all of those countries claim sovereign territory that is also contested and claimed by the Chinese Communist Party of the People's Republic of China.

Of course, it hasn't even been 25 years since China took control of Hong Kong under the "one country, two systems" framework. China had promised Hong Kong it would retain a high degree of autonomy for at least a half a century, but, obviously, Beijing eroded the freedoms and independence of Hong Kong to the point of basically hijacking that city and that entity.

The Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Delhi told our delegation that Taiwan isn't the problem; it is a China problem. And I think he has a point.

In other words, what is at stake here is much larger than the future of just one nation. It is the entire scope of Beijing's power and its ambitions in the region. Taiwan is not the final goal. It is the next step in a quest to reach regional dominance.

Taiwan will likely be the first target because it has been identified by President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party, but it certainly won't be the last. I think it would be the ultimate in naivety, first, to think, well, this is just about Taiwan. It is not just about Taiwan. China will continue to threaten; intimidate; and, unfortunately, I think, ultimately threaten and invade its neighbors. And if that aggression goes unchecked, the CCP's power grab will reach further and further.

Plus, I believe in the power of deterrence, what Ronald Reagan called

peace through strength. Nobody wants a military conflict in this region—nobody.

If the CCP can attain its goals without a shot being fired, they will try to do that. They are already trying to do that. But the fact of the matter is, if the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party worked to conduct a military invasion of Taiwan, there are a multitude of risks of mistakes, miscalculations, and other dangers that could lead to a larger conflict.

And I believe we have a responsibility in the United States to make sure, to the extent humanly possible, that that does not happen. We want peace, but we also want to stand up to the kind of aggression that we are seeing in practice and being threatened in the Indo-Pacific region. I believe that countering and first confronting the threats from the PRC is one of the greatest national security imperatives of our generation.

Russia, obviously, is a significant power, mainly because it holds nuclear weapons; but it mainly tries to find places where the United States is having a hard time and tries to make those situations more challenging for us. It doesn't compare to the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC in terms of its regional ambitions, its attempt to project its power and its control over the region.

We need to reorient the way that our country views and responds to this threat, and I believe that time is of the essence. As I said, some people have said that President Xi could wait until as late as 2027 to try to take Taiwan, but there is no guarantee that it couldn't happen earlier if they deem it an opportunity to exist for them to do so.

The longer Beijing is treated as a reasonable, goal-oriented country by the international community, the more aggressive it will become. One seemingly small step we must take is to describe China's actions with accurate terms. We can't do the CCP any favor using watered-down euphemisms like human rights abuses when what we are really talking about is genocide. Here in the Senate, as we know, words are important, but those words need to be accompanied with action.

We will soon vote on the National Defense Authorization Act, which will help us raise the issue and visibility of this potential conflict and raise the opportunity for deterrence in response to growing threats posed by China. We can do good work here on the Defense authorization bill to raise the cost to the PRC in the event they decided to invade Taiwan.

The Defense Authorization Act includes a bipartisan bill I introduced with Senator DUCKWORTH called the Taiwan Partnership Act. This bill would establish a formal partnership between the U.S. National Guard and the Taiwanese defense forces to strengthen Taiwan's preparedness.

Should troops need to deploy quickly in the event of a crisis, they would be armed with the same knowledge and skills as our dedicated U.S. National Guardsmen. This would also help Taiwan build up much of its asymmetric defenses.

The Defense Authorization Act also includes legislation I introduced with Senator KING, from Maine, to ensure that the United States and Taiwan can improve defense interoperability. There shouldn't be any barriers to cooperating on important security measures like integrated air and missile defense systems.

The Defense Authorization Act includes other provisions to increase defense cooperation with Taiwan and equip the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command with greater resources. It also ensures that the United States will take a stronger approach and confront the threats being made by the Chinese Communist Party.

This is not a partisan issue, as you can tell. After the delegation I led to Taipei, it was followed on by a bipartisan coalition mainly from Members of the House, and I think it is absolutely critical that that spirit of bipartisanship and the reality of bipartisanship continues to exist when it comes to the threat posed by the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party.

I appreciate colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have championed the provisions I mentioned and those who may have other ideas about how we can deter acts of aggression, not only against Taiwan but against other countries in the region when it comes to disputed islands and other territory.

I want to thank Chairman REED, Ranking Member INHOFE, and our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for all the work they have put into this bill so far. One of our most solemn responsibilities is to provide for the common defense, and this is the best way to ensure that our national defense is prepared to meet the challenges on the horizon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

NOMINATION OF JEROME POWELL

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, Jerome Powell was a better choice for Federal Reserve Chair than Lael Brainard, but that alone is not a good enough reason to confirm Chairman Powell for a second term. Chairman Powell has presided over a series of failures at the Fed, while the Fed's actions during his tenure have harmed working-class Americans and worsened inequality. The Senate should not support his re-nomination.

The core mission of the Federal Reserve from the very beginning has been to foster stable prices and ensure a sound currency. No one—no one—can seriously argue that the Fed has accomplished this mission under Mr. Powell's leadership. After years of reckless policy and months of obfusca-

tion, inflation now exceeds 6 percent, the highest rate of inflation in 30 years—the highest rate of inflation in 30 years.

An inflationary economy rewards will-be speculators and the holders of large assets and debts like, for instance, the Federal Government or giant corporations, but it ruins responsible citizens who are just trying to save for their retirements or maybe their kids' colleges.

In the worst-case scenario, the value of money can collapse, endangering society itself. In less catastrophic but still serious conditions, Americans who have played by the rules for many years, responsibly working and saving, see the value of their money slowly erode over time.

Nearly half of all Americans have no exposure whatsoever to the stock market, not a single stock or mutual fund or pension—no exposure to the stock market. Their money is usually held in low-interest checking accounts, savings accounts, certificates of deposit, and cash. The Fed's extreme low-interest-rate policy means their thrift and prudence earns them nothing. In fact, it sets them back every day with this inflationary spiral. Money outside the stock market loses value every day when inflation is at 30-year highs and interest rates are near record lows.

Likewise, 6 percent inflation has totally wiped out any nominal wage gains for workers. In fact, inflation-adjusted weekly earnings are down 1.6 percent compared with a year ago. Real inflation-adjusted wages are down from last year when employers across the country report shortages of workers. That is because inflation is eating away at all those wage gains. And there is no guarantee that inflation at 6 percent is the ceiling.

Still, the Fed has refused to change course even as prices rose on everything from groceries to gasoline. Chairman Powell insisted for months that the pain was only "temporary" or "transitory." According to so-called "experts," inflation would simply vanish once Pete Buttigieg sorted out the supply chains and we got the Delta variant under control. But after months of skyrocketing prices, Chairman Powell's confidence looks not only misplaced and misinformed but reckless.

This week, Mr. Powell admitted that he would retire—retire—the word "transitory," the very word he helped popularized. If only American families could so easily retire the devastating effects of inflation on their monthly budgets.

Mr. Powell has directly contributed to this inflation. He has maintained the Fed's so-called emergency monetary policies a decade after the emergency of the financial crisis had ended. That means the Fed had already exhausted the normal tools of monetary policy when the pandemic hit last spring. It had to prop up the economy through unprecedented levels of government intervention. These policies,

while perhaps justified for a very brief period of uncertainty in the spring of 2020—very brief—policies which included huge purchases of government bonds, mortgage debt, and corporate debt—but they were not justified after that, just as they weren't justified before it, even as the Fed was continuing unparalleled levels of quantitative easing.

As a result, the Fed's balance sheet has ballooned to \$9 trillion, and it continues to grow by more than \$100 billion a month. Nine trillion dollars. Let me put that in perspective. The Fed's balance sheet after the financial crisis barely surpassed \$2 trillion.

The chief result of these policies during the pandemic has been to boost asset prices, especially the stock market valuations of giant corporations. But the price of these gains has been inflation, which especially harms working-class Americans. After releasing a torrent of cash into the economy, it is no surprise that prices are rising in this flood of cheap money.

This week, Chairman Powell testified that he might—he might—unwind these policies a little faster than previously planned, but even if the Fed follows through—and I will believe it when I see it after the last many years of radical emergency monetary policy—it will still be too little, too late.

The simple fact is, the Fed, under Chairman Powell's leadership, has forced millions of American families to choose whether to pay the mortgage or feed their families or fill up their gas tanks, heat their homes, or maybe buy a couple of extra Christmas presents. That is failure.

While inflation is the Fed's worst failure under Chairman Powell, it is not their only failure. At a time when they cannot achieve their core mission of price stability, they are adopting ancillary missions like "woke" activism at the Fed. The Fed has joined an international effort devoted to "greening" the financial system, whatever that means. Fed branches around the country are even spreading critical race theory, claiming that terms like "Founding Fathers" and "blacklist" are "biased" and sharing radical materials that claim that—this is a direct quote from some of the materials that Fed branches have shared—"race-neutral policies uphold racism." Think about that. The Fed's core mission is to maintain price stability. While they fail on that mission, they are teaching their employees that race-neutral policies are racist.

We might chuckle and shake our heads and have a good laugh when this kind of nonsense happened at Bard College or some other college campus, but now it is happening at the Nation's central bank, which plays a role in determining whether we end up rich or poor. This mission creep is alarming, especially when the Fed is failing to fulfill its core mission.

I know many people have made excuses for the Fed, and they defended

Mr. Powell's tenure. They said inflation was not his fault or primarily the Fed's fault. But it is true the Democrats have been spending trillions of dollars this year we don't have. But, as Bill Parcells said about NFL teams, you are what your record says you are. The Fed's record is 6 percent inflation, the worst inflation in 30 years.

Most Americans live in a world of accountability and consequences, the lack of which is one of the things they hate most about Washington. Failure in Washington is too often rewarded. The Fed has manifestly failed during Chairman Powell's tenure, further skewing our economy in favor of the wealthy while the working class suffers. There have to be consequences for this kind of failure. Jerome Powell is not the right choice to continue to lead the Federal Reserve.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the Defense bill that is currently before the Senate and note that the majority leader this morning made some mention and some complaints about substantive, timely, and important amendments that are being offered by my colleagues. He was particularly agitated, it seems, about an amendment dealing with communist China.

Well, the U.S. Senate has a lot of work to do by the end of the year. We need to fund the government. We need to prevent a shutdown. We need to deal with the debt ceiling. Democrats are going to need to lift that. We need to make sure that our troops are funded and that we deal with the Defense bill. These are some of the important issues that are before the Senate.

Yet, here we are, near the end of the year, scrambling to get it all done in just a couple of weeks—no way to run the U.S. Senate. We haven't had an appropriations bill brought to the floor all year, and the Defense bill has been sitting in limbo for months.

The Armed Services Committee actually finished marking up this bill in July. It is a bipartisan bill. It passed the vote in the committee by 23 to 3. Things don't get a lot more bipartisan than that.

So, typically, the Senate starts working on the Defense bill and then negotiates over the next couple of months. We start in June. But, instead, we have gone months and months and months.

We have seen the disastrous collapse and fall and withdrawal in Afghanistan, and yet no Defense bill to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

So what did the Democrats try to do instead?

Well, they pushed a very partisan agenda and brought to the floor two bills on election takeovers. And the Democrats also seem to be very obsessed with their own bill. They want to call it Build Back Better, something like that. I will tell you, it is a bill that is going to break the backs of American families.

So now here we are, just at the deadline, and the majority leader is finally getting around to dealing with a bill that has to do with supporting the troops. It seems to me that is like a kid with a term paper that is due tomorrow. It is the night before, and they are going to start writing the term paper.

Well, if you want to get it right, it takes a longer process than that. It is a long process, generally, because it is that important for the Nation. Every Senator wants to be involved.

Yet, through the procrastination by the majority leader, the Defense bill has been delayed.

Now, I have made the case that, frankly, national security has been a very low priority of this President and this administration and the majority party in the House and in the Senate. And the reason I say that, exhibit A, is the fact that the budget that President Biden proposed when he came into office—and let's be frank. The budget he proposed was a massive, supersizing of the size of the Federal Government—more money for this, more money for that, more money for everything except for two items alone. Only two items in the entire Federal budget came in to grow at a rate less than inflation—less than inflation.

Now, what were those two items? Defense and homeland security. That tells me how this administration prioritizes the role of our Nation's security for our country.

So, finally, we have gotten to work on this bill, and there are some concerns because amendments need to be voted on, debated, brought to this floor.

I have introduced an amendment with the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee to sanction the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. There is bipartisan agreement that that pipeline needed to be sanctioned, and we have been fighting for that together in a bipartisan way through multiple administrations.

This is Vladimir Putin's pipeline to which Joe Biden has given the stamp of approval. It is a weapon that Putin is going to be using to hold half of Europe hostage. And under what this administration has been doing on energy—penalizing American energy production and begging Putin to produce more and sell it to us—this has been a jackpot for Vladimir Putin.

Our amendment would do the right thing and block this President's present to Vladimir Putin—a Christmas present. And this is at a time with

Joe Biden inflation that we have many Americans worrying if they are going to even be able to afford to buy Christmas presents. This is no time for our Nation to give this present to Vladimir Putin.

The Republican Senator from Ohio has introduced an important amendment to provide lethal aid to Ukraine. Vladimir Putin has 100,000 troops right now staged on the border with Ukraine. We ought to stand by Ukraine and pass that amendment.

The Senator from Montana has an amendment to block Joe Biden from sending \$400,000 to the families of illegal immigrants. An open border is a threat to our national security, and these payments would cause a mad rush if not a stampede to the country and into the country, the way the border has been left open.

There are lots of important amendments, and we ought to be having a fair and open debate. This is supposed to be the greatest deliberative body in the world, and yet the majority leader has tried to cut off debate on some of the most important issues facing our Nation.

Why? Because we can hear the clock ticking, that is why. He has dragged his feet for months, and now, he wants to force us into a mad dash to close this.

Look, it is a disservice to our troops. It is a disservice to our allies. It is a disservice to the people of our Nation.

And yet, this morning, the majority leader is pointing his finger. He came to the floor. He attacked Republicans.

We didn't make him delay this bill for month after month after month. This is a choice that the majority leader has made.

It does seem that the other Democrats have basically higher priorities than our Nation's defense: election takeovers, new entitlements, amnesty for illegal immigrants.

It is no way to govern, no way to make important decisions, no way to run the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

NOMINATION OF BRIAN EDDIE NELSON

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to join me in confirming Brian Nelson to serve as Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes at the Department of Treasury.

Mr. Nelson is highly qualified. He has had years of dedicated public service to our country.

Early in his career, he clerked for two distinguished Federal judges. He served in the National Security Division at the Department of Justice, first as special counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for National Security, later as the Division's Deputy Chief of Staff.

In these roles, Mr. Nelson supported the development, the implementation, the coordination, and the review of U.S. intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and national security policies.

He went to work for the California Department of Justice, where he served

as special assistant attorney general and then as general counsel to then-attorney general, now-Vice President HARRIS.

He worked to combat threats like human and drug trafficking by prosecuting international criminals, starving them of their financial resources.

As Under Secretary, Mr. Nelson will be responsible for protecting our financial system from terrorists, from rogue states, money launderers, weapons proliferators, and other criminals who threaten our national security.

His nomination is another example of the Biden administration's serious—underline “serious”—efforts to protect both our economy and our national security.

He would take on this job at a critical time for protecting our country's national security, as we work to rebuild alliances abroad, while threats of domestic terrorism are on the rise at home.

Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence is one of the cornerstones of our country's efforts. That is the importance of this nomination of Mr. Nelson, one of our country's efforts to combat terrorist financing here and around the world.

The FBI Director recently testified that racially motivated and anti-government extremists are likely to be the biggest domestic threat this year and in 2022.

Think about that. The FBI Director testified that racially motivated and anti-government extremists—and we remember that day so well just 10 months ago—11 months ago. They are the likely biggest domestic threats to our country this year and next year.

Mr. Nelson will be the first African American serving in this important national security position. When we have people in these roles who reflect the country they serve, we get better, more competent government.

That is what always flummoxes me about hiring practices in this body and around the country. When you hire people that don't necessarily look like you, you get a better office that understands different perspectives. It understands better the way this country works and helps us to better serve the people whom we serve.

Unfortunately, we have seen far too many of this administration's nominees held up for months in the nominations process. You just heard an example of that in the speech right before me; not because of their background, experience, and qualifications—those are unquestioned in Mr. Nelson—but for reasons completely unrelated to that nomination.

That is what has happened here. It is the kind of partisan posturing the American people hate. Blocking critical national security and other policy nominees for months over unrelated policy issues is counterproductive; it is misguided; and it is wrong for our country. Going after human trafficking, going after drug trafficking, going after international criminals of all kinds isn't a partisan issue; it is something my Republican colleagues

and I work together on all the time. So let's come together today and confirm Mr. Nelson, who is exceptionally well qualified.

He is joined today by his wife and his son.

I urge this body to support Mr. Nelson's nomination, getting in place right away an important part of our national security team.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. President, under the agreement reached by the two leaders on November 16, the Senate will now vote on confirmation of the Nelson nomination.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Nelson nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Brian Eddie Nelson, of California, to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Nelson nomination?

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 474 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Hassan	Padilla	Wyden
Heinrich	Peters	

NAYS—49

Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Cramer	Lummis	Toomey
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young
Ernst	Murkowski	
Fischer	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

Thune